WHE ENGLISH CHAPTER-HOUSE

ALBERT CHARLES PHELPS B.S.

1903

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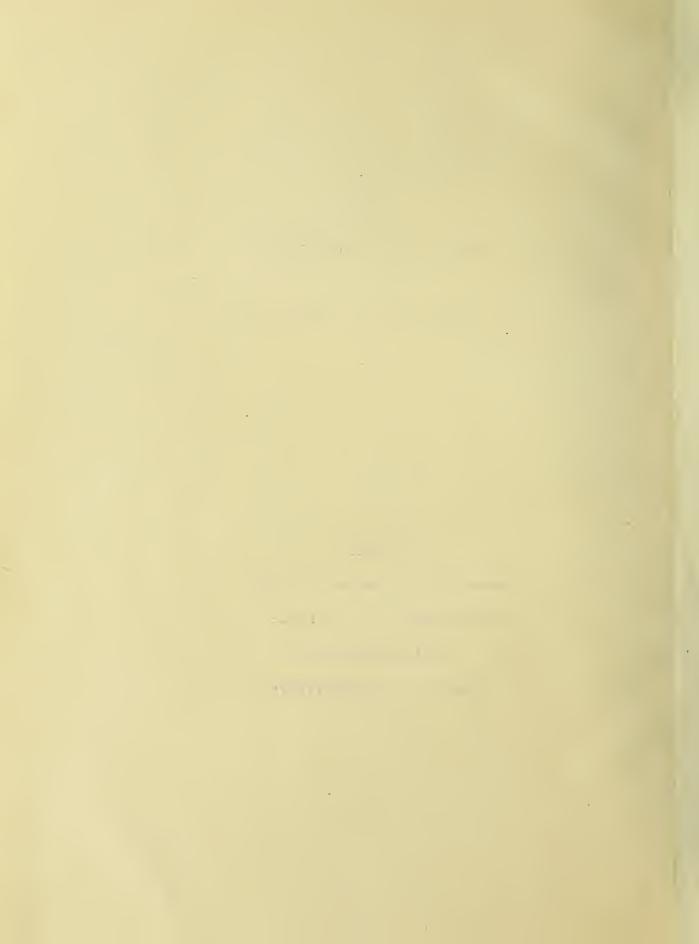
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THE ENGLISH CHAPTER-HOUSE

BY

ALBERT CHARLES PHELPS, B. S., '94

THESIS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

IN THE

GRADUATE SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1903

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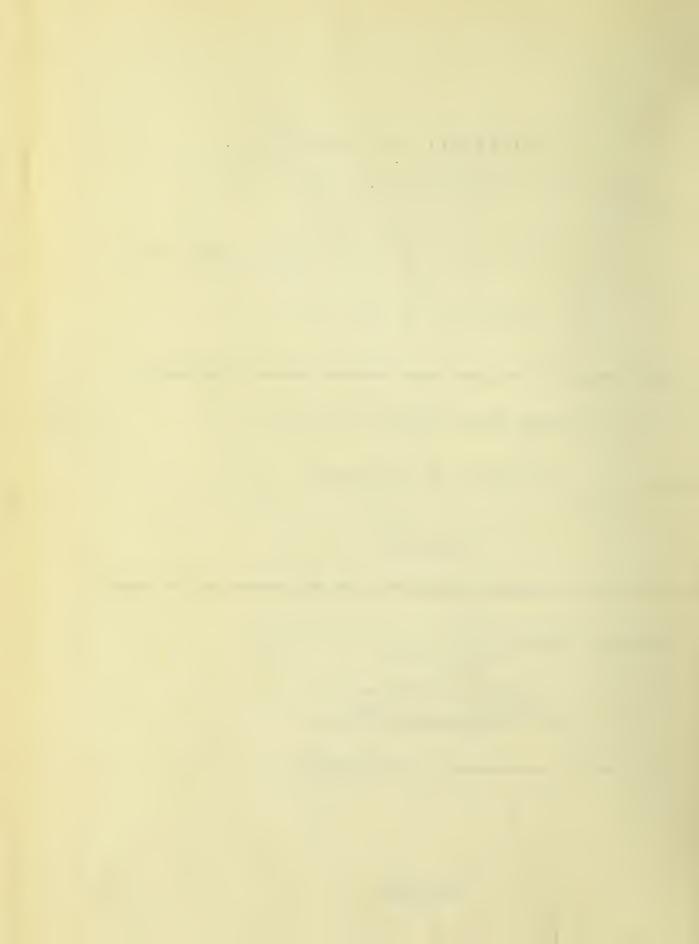
ENTITLED The English Chapter-House

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of Master of Architecture

N. Cliffond Ricker

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF Architecture



THE ENGLISH CHAPTER-HOUSE

by

Albert Charles Phelps B.S.

A Thesis

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Presented to the Faculty of

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

for the Degree of

Master of Architecture

1903.

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THE RESERVE AND THE RESERVE

The chapter-house, although not exclusively an English production, was most frequent and reached its highest development in England. Originating in the Continental monastic establishments, it was introduced into England by the monastic orders and there became not only an essential part of the monasteries, but was added to nearly all the great secular cathedrals.

The early purpose of the chapter-house was to provide a meeting-place for the chapter of the monastery. Its convenience recommended it to the secular clergy and it became a common feature in the group of cathedral buildings in all parts of the kingdom. In it the meetings of the canons of the cathedral were held and secular deliberative assemblies were not excluded. Its picturesque and oftentimes artistic form added greatly to the architectural effect of the cathedral or abbey church to which it was attached, and in the development of its vaulting the highest type of Gothic structural art was reached.

The earliest chapter-houses of importance in England were built during the first half of the twelvth century; among these

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may be mentioned the chapter-houses at Durham (Fig.1) and Reading with groined vaults about thirty-five feet wide (dating from about 1150); Gloucester (Fig.2), of about the same width, still retaining its pointed barrel vault on transverse ribs; the fine chapter-house of the Cistercian Abbey Ford in Dorsenshire (of about 1145), groin vaulted in two bays twenty by twenty-two feet, with level crown and the transverse and end wall ribs bluntly pointed; Bristol (Fig.3), similarly groined, the arches and vaults definitely pointed and the bays twenty-one by twenty-seven feet.



Fig.1. Interior of Durham Chapter-House.
(Restoration)

LET be mentioned the quapter Lusees at Suchem (Fig.) and neading with grouned autis about thirty-five deer wide dating from and 1150 , Gloudester (Fig. 1), of alout the same width ettil retaining its points acres to the same width ettil retaining its points are a large fine chapter now of the determined Attest for in Borresteined & Bout 1145 groin and the transmerse and and mail rich them? Two feet, Ith Terminated form and the transmerse and and mail rich them? pointed, grainted (Fig. 5), similarly groined, the arcres end a list definite?

Fig.1. Interior of Durnam Cuapter-Nouse.

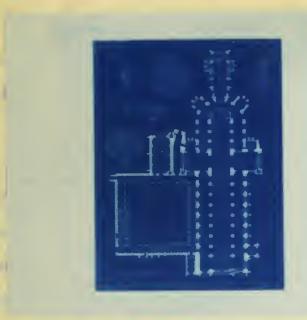


Fig. 2. Plan of Gloucester Cathedral showing Chapter-House.



Fig. 3. Interior of Bristol Chapter-House.

Fig. 2. Plan of Windester Cathedral showing Chapter-House.

Tig. 3. Interior of Pristol Chapter House.

We see in these chapter-houses the widest vaulted spans of the first half of the twelvth century in England and a considerable development toward the Gothic vault of the thirteenth century.

Winchester had a chapter-house of the twelvth century, 90 by 40ft., of which but fragments remain, and that at Canterbury was rebuilt and greatly modified in the late thirteenth and again in the fifteenth century. The interior has recently been restored. See Fig. 4.



Fig.4. Canterbury Cathedral from North-West showing Chapter-House.

We see in these chapter-house the vilest and spens of the first unit of the twelth century in including and a considerable dayal character of the chirceasth century.

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Fig. 4. Camerburg da dedral from Borth-Test
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"The Benedictine chapter-house as it took form in England was a rectangular room about twice as long as wide, set parallel with the axis of the church and, as dictated by convenience for the cloister, either north or south of the transept from which it was separated by a narrow passage or chamber called a "slype".

It usually projected in an eastern apse, by the windows of which it was lighted, while the entrance from the cloister was by a great round archway flanked on either side by round-arched, double-lighted windows."

The Benedictine dormitory usually lay beyond or outside the immediate neighborhood of the transept, so that the chapter-house could rise to full height with no story above to suppress its ceiling. But the Augustinians and Cistercians, with their stricter habit of night service, had for convenience the dormitory immediately abutting on the transept, into which it descended by the night stair. Thus their chapter-house, though following the traditional Benedictine position, had their western porticoes lower, so that the passageway from the dormitory might pass over them. The Benedictines of Chester adopted this arrangement in rebuilding their chapter-house in the thirteenth century, and it remains excellently preserved internally. (Figs. 5-8)

"The Labediction chapter note it took for in Ergland was a rect ngular roce about this at long relian, set product with the axis of the church and, as alotated by consumer continuing the classer, singer north or south of the transport from aich that separated by a narro passar or charmer collect a "slype". It usually chected in an inducting also, the wholes of which as lighted, falls the untrance from the choister as by a resit countral arches from the choister as by a resit countral arches from the choister as by a resit countral arches from the countral of and or either also by round accountral of and or either also by round accountral or either also be round accountral or either accountral or either also by round accountral or either also by round accountral or either also by round accountral or either acco

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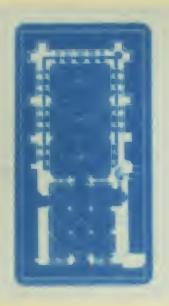


Fig. 5. Plan of Chester Chapter-House.



Fig.6. Entrance to Vestibule of Chester Chapter-House.

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Fig. 6. Entrance to estible of Chester Chapter-House.

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Fig. 7. Vestibule of Chester Chapter-House.

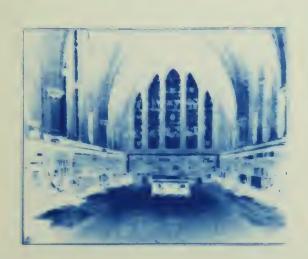


Fig. 8. Interior of Chester Chapter-House.

Fig.7, Testituie of Chaster Compter-Wouse.

Fig.H. Interior of Charter Chapter-House.

The vestibule opens directly from the north transept, without any slype, and its three aisles, each of three bays, are vaulted to four central piers, the ribs rising from the ground, with no capitals. The triple openings into the cloister show the Norman tradition, refined and pointed, and to the east, entered from the vestibule by a similar screen, the chapter-room rises 30ft, high. It is 50ft. long and 28ft, wide, vaulted in three rectangular bays, the vaulting sharply pointed and the ribs supported upon clustered columns against the walls. The windows, triple lancets, between the piers completely fill the spandrels and five lancet windows occupy the end wall.

"But", says Prior in his History of Gothic Art in England,
"It was in the hands of the Cistercians that the chapter-house had
its most English development. All their convents being abbeys,
with a system of visitation from the mother-house to the daughters,
considerable accommodation was needed for their assemblages. In the
north of England especially were noble rooms built with triple
aisles of three or four bays. Few of these chapter-houses remain
except in scanty ruins. Usually built after the churches, when the
austerities of the first Cistercian style had been tempered by
the passion for building, they exhibit steep four-part vaults upon

The estibule opens directly from the north transport, without any siyoe, and its three aisles, such of three boys, are vanited to feur central piers, the rice rising from the ground, with no capitals. The triple contings into two chiefer show the from the truit tion, refined and pointed, and to the east, entered from the venticular by a cimilar, ecreen, the doubled room these SOFt, aight it is SOFT, long and Dôft, electronical to the entered for the evicting that is proved and the first entered columns of the entered against the windows supported and the process of the completely fill the appointels and the lancets, retream that piers completely fill the appointels and the lancets ripdows occupy the completely fill the appointels and the lancets ripdows occupy the

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sunterlines of the Lieut Startelan mills and countents, when the

slender piers, octagonal or clustered, and with their delicate carving and elaborate mouldings represent some of the earliest advances of the rich North-England Gothic. The detail of the door-ways with their flanking two-lighted openings is especially refined. (See Fig. 9, a typical plan). But all are of similar composition, and follow the Romanesque disposition as it had been at Bristol. Later in the thirteenth century this aisled planning of the chapter-house was taken south to Netley, but generally, except in the York-shire district, the earliest Cistercian houses seem to have followed the Benedictine arrangement of a plain rectangular vaulted room-square-ended, however, instead of apsed.

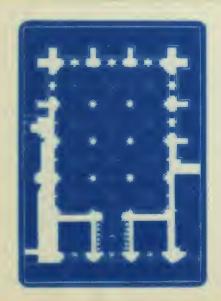


Fig.9. Furness Chapter-House.

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Fig. 8, applical plant, but all are of to ther composition, and forlow the southeasth other of the same at interior. Later
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[.]Lg.3. Turnes Campt radings.

But in the west there arose another very distinctive form, seemingly in Cistercian hands, though the earliest example known is at Worcester(about 1180). Here the chapter-house is circular, nearly 60ft. in diameter, vaulted with ten ribs to a central pier (Figs.10-11).

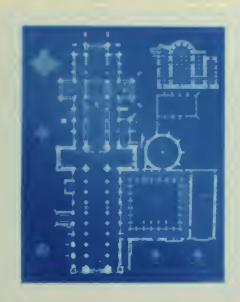


Fig. 10. Plan of Worcester Cathedral showing Chapter-House.

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Fig. 10. Plan of Ferenster Cothedral showing Chapter-House.



Fig. 11. Worcester Chapter-House, Interior.

Almost contemporary would seem the circular chapter-house of Margam(about 1147), vaulted with twelve ribs(Fig.12), and quickly following this, that of Dore, 43ft. in diameter with twelve sides and clustered shaft.

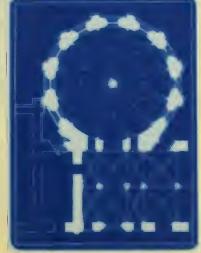


Fig. 12. Margam Chapter-House, Plan.

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Fig. 1. occurre chapter douse, Interior.

Almost contemporary ould some the niroular chapter-house of arrested with twelve risefff. [2], and outerly rollowing tals, that of Dore, Eff. in diameter with irollowing and clustered sout.

Ti.12.12. Lastes Charles-Roses, Flam.

In the thirteenth century the idea passed to the secular canons at Lincoln, where the ten-sided chapter-house (Figs. 13-15), about 60ft. across, may possibly have been laid out by St. Hugh before 1200, though vaulted about thirty years later, when the deeply projecting flying buttresses, which give it so distinctive an exterior were probably added.



Fig. 13. Lincoln Chapter-House, Plan.

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Fig. 13. Lincoln Chapter Touse, lan.



Fig.14. Lincoln Cathedral from the East showing Chapter-House.



Fig. 15. Lincoln Chapter-House, Interior.

116.14. Lincoln Cathedral f.c. the East slowing Charles - House.

ig. 15. Linuoln Charter ou e. Interior.

At Beverly and then at Lichfield(Figs.16&17)eight-sided plans were adopted, and, after the middle of the thirteenth century, in the building of these great rooms were developed those characteristic excellencies of the English style shown at Salisbury, Westminster and elsewhere.

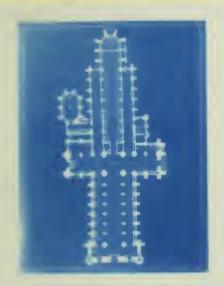


Fig. 16. Lichfield Cathedral showing Chapter-House.



Fig. 17. Lichfield Chapter-House, Interior.

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Fig. 18. Lice Field (= condred aboving Compter-Source.

Fig. 17. Licifield Compt r-Come, laterior.

"In the polygonal chapter-house the English feeling for breadth of surface in vault and window, and for its contrast in mass of abutment, combine for a perfect Gothic achievement, which is as completely constructive and as logically satisfying as in any French building. The interpenetration of the two arts, and yet the distinct genius of each, is well illustrated in these chapter-houses, which at once come nearest in their completely Gothic suggestion to the polygonal endings of the French chevet, and yet in their origin and treatment are so characteristically English.

They are at the summit of English building art at once in their Gothic as in their national quality." (Prior)

The list below gives details of the most important. They were added to nearly all the secular cathedrals during the thirteenth century, Chichester and Exeter(Fig. 18) alone remaining content with the oblong room of Benedictine tradition.



Fig. 18. Exeter Chapter-House, Interior.

"In the polygonal chapter-house to English feeling for breedth of surface in vault and without, and for its contrast in the set of surface in value of a profest Tothic conference, which is as completely construct of the set as in the set of the substitution. The interpretation of the substitution of the substitution." (Frior)

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Fig. 18. Eleter Chapter-Bouse, loterior.

A list of polygonal chapter-houses, based upon the table in Prior's History of Gothic Art in England, p. 319.

Date--Form&Construction -- Internal -- W. of -- Position. Diameter Bay orcester Cath.B. c1140 59f.t. 17ft. ordinary monasti circular 10-bayed with central pier with cloister. argam Abbey C. X c1180 circular 12-bayed 497 t. 13ft. ordinary monasti with central pier with cloister. ore Abbey C x 12-sided&bayed 45ft. 12ft. ordinary monasti c1180 with cloister. with central pier incoln Cath. Sec. 1190-10-sided&bayed 85ft. 19ft. off N.E. Transept with central pier with small clois 1230 everlyMins.Sec. c1230 8-sided&bayed 31ft. 13ft. N. of Choir with central pier with crypt. 8-sided&10-bayed ichfield Sec. c1240 40by28ft.11&1/2 E. of N. Transept with central pier no cloister. estminsterAb. B. c1250 8-sided&8-bayed 82ft. 24ft. ordinary monasti with central pier with cloister. alisburyCath.Sec.cl260 8-sided &8-bayed 62ft. 23ft. ordinary monasti with cloister. with central pier ells Cath. Sec. 1260-8-sided&8-bayed 56ft. 21ft. N.side of Choir with central pier with crypt. 1290 Southwell Sec. c1280 8-sided with no pier 35ft. 13ft. N. side of Choir without cloister York Cath. Sec. 1290-8-sided with no pier 59ft. 23ft. N. side of Choir 1310 without cloister Hereford Cath. Sec. c1300 10-sided&-hayed 42ft. 13ft. ordinary monasti with central pier with cloister. ond on Cath. 8-sided&bayed ordinary monasti with central pier

with cloister.

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A list of moigroupl obspicer-rounds, beard upon the table in Prior's History of Tethic A.c. in England, p. 312.

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Fig. 19. Westminster Abbey Chapter-House, Interior.



Fig. 20. Salisbury Cath. Chapter-House, Interior.

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its. 20. Salle or Cale. Date - Ross, Interior.



Fig. 21. Salisbury Chapter-House, Detail of Door.



Fig. 22. Salisbury Chapter-House, Vaulting.

Picellstory Chapter-Sound. Detail of Door.

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Fig. 23. Wells Cath. showing Chapter-House.



Fig. 24. Wells, N. Side, showing Chapter-House.

Fig. 23. Tells Cath. mowing thapter House.

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Fig. 25. Wells Chapter-House, Plan.



Fig.26.Wells Chapter-House, Section.

FIN. 25. Wells thantar-House, Plan.



Fig. 27. Wells Chapter-House, Interior.



Fig. 28. Wells Chapter-House, Vaulting.

1 .27. wells charter-Sous , Interior.



Fig. 29. Southwell Chapter-House, Entrance.



Fig. 30. Southwell Chapter-House, Details.

Fig. 29. Duchwell Charter-louse, Intrance.

Fig. 33. Southwell Learner-Boune, Date 15.

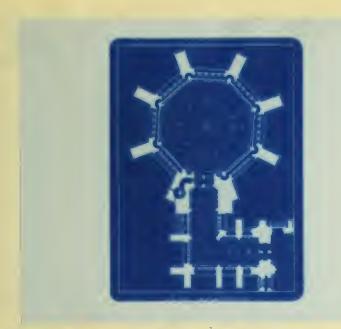


Fig.31.York Chapter-House, Plan.



Fig. 32. York Cath. showing Chapter-House.

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Fig. 33. York Chapter-House, Vaulting.



Fig.34. Ripon Chapter-House, Interior.

i . W. York Charter-House, aulting.

Fig.54. siyes Chapter-House, Interior.

With its accompanying arcaded passage this secular chapter-house is to be regarded as a great chamber of state, a palatial appendage designed to enhance collegiate dignity and make it vie with monastic consequence. As such Lincoln may have led the way with its decagonal hall, whose foundation was possibly St. Hugh's, though its vaulting came later. At Beverly perhaps was built the first octagon, which thereafter was the accepted plan. Here it was in two stories, and though now entirely destroyed, its office of state and distinction is to be seen in the elegant staircase that led from the north side of the canons' choir.

The building at Westminster was in the form of a state apartment, superceding the original Benedictine hall, and one side of the old pent house cloister, the king designing it magnificently as an adjunct for his palace as well as for the uses of the monastery.

And so, too, Salisbury received the idea, making stately garth as well as chapter-hall, in the latter being followed by Wells, York and Southwell. These last two dispensed with the central pier, but the groining of York was only in wood, and the Southwell hall is but half the size of the greater pillared chapter-houses.

With its accompanies arouse consequent consequent completes access to the sequence of sections of states, a paletical access of the sequence of sections of the sequence of th

The suiding at "estainster was in the form on a state againmunt, appeared ing the original temedicator hall, and one also of the old part house closures, the doc among all a spiritounity as an as jumpet for his palace as well as for age mass of the monastery. And so, too, salimenty received the time, middle mately math as well as chapter-hall, in the latter being followed by "elis, Yor: and Southwell. These last two dispenses with the central pier, but the grotning of form was only in wood, and the Southwell hall is not half the size of the granter of larger bourses. At this time or later, many of the monks or canons adopted the secular polygon, but few of these chapter-houses have come down to us unless attached to the cathedrals. Of the great chapter-houses of the thirteenth century that remain, that at Lincoln has been recently restored, and that at Westminster is externally nothing but the work of Sir Gilbert Scott. But though their ancient charm has gone, and we see them now only as good specimens of imitative Gothic, there is still in the character of their broad English designing evidence of the native vigor of the middle thirteenth century ideal. "Very widely and finely do they plant the bases of their expression—those weathered and sloping flying buttresses which contrast with the scaffold—like erections of the contemporary French construction." (Prior)

Salisbury chapter-house has less of thes English power, but internally the charm is fully that of Westminster. In their window design and in their vaults both Salisbury and Westminster are less indicative of the English feeling than the northern and western examples. At York and Wells, as at Lincoln, the chapter-houses are of two periods, being completed about thirty years after they were laid out. Neither has been greatly changed by time or restoration,

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and we can still see much of the genuine Gsthic inspiration.

The external shapeliness of York(Figs.31-33), its pillarless spaciousness, make a remarkable impression, and its walls and wooden ceiling are richly detailed with the romantic profusion of the fourteenth century. And yet, exquisite as is their handling, such arcades and vaults appear to have overstepped the point in art when its display is unconscious and natural.

wells chapter-house (Figs. 23-28) was by some twenty years earlier, and we can turn to it with the surer impression that we have here an ideal building in the center of the English style, exhibiting its essence and quality. Passing into it from the picturesque stairway, which its under story made necessary, we can note how its canopied arcades, wide windows with the lancet traceries of central England, and richly branched vaults, sum up the tendencies of the central phase of English Gothic. "Midway between the lava-like out-pouring of the earliest Gothic eruption and that slow crystalization of form which slowly yielded up its heat to the last Gothic phase, there can be traced here neither the first crudeness nor the latest mannerisms; and middle, too, in point of place and style among the works of its time, it is just half way

and we can still see much of the condine Pathic inspiration.

The external shape inow of fore("i-s.31-35"), its ciliaries spaciousness, are a reservoir tappension, and its mails and continue condition with the round correction centur. And yet, samulant as is that handling the fourtienth centur. And yet, samulant as is that handling and areas are spacing of the continue areas and the pathic in unconcious on a tappension of the areas is the fourties of the continue areas and the samulant areas are samulant.

Wells complete nous (Firs.23.23) was by some twenty years and ter, and we can turn to it with the surer impression that we has a nero am ideal children in the center of the inclinants; is exhibiting its emente and quality. Fassing into it from the pictureague staires, which its under story make necessary, so can note the list canopied archest, which whom white, was up the tenders of central Palved and richly branches mults, was up the tendencies of the central phase of inclina Control Story tetreen the lavality bears of the central pouring of the emilwest country study that the last flotus where the form and the time last flotus where there can be traced now neither the street of the central state of the last flotus where the intent the street can be traced now neither the street of point of the central state, in the state of the central state, in the last flotus according works of the time, it is ust make many lines and at the according works of the time, it is ust make many lines.

between the superb stateliness of the Yorkshire manner and the sunny, romantic grace of the southern. And in this sense we may read its position at the summit of English Gothic inspiration: that as an architectonic whole, its effect is to make the earlier efforts of Gothic interior seem somewhat empty, and the later somewhat tawdry. Yet it is to be observed that in the building, exceedingly beautiful and unsurpassed as it is, figure sculpture has no part, and that, too, in the house of the greatest school of English sculpture, Wells itself".

In these chapter-houses we can trace the systematic and logical development of vaulting, from the simple semicircular groined
vaulting of Durham to the elaborate and artificial construction
at York. The tendency in the polygonal buildings seems to have
been toward the development of a true Gothic dome, which was approximated most closely in form, but not in material, in the vaults of
the York chapter-house and the octagon at Ely. The ideas incorporated were novel and vigorous, and it is greatly to be regretted
that the logical result was not attained.

In the treatment of the polygonal vault with the central pier two distinct lines of reasoning were followed: in the one the vault was assumed to span from the sides of the polygon to the cen-

such property and the southern. And in this conse we may such position at the cuteff of facility of the southern and in the conse we may real its position at the cuteff of facility of the cuteff of constant and the cuteff of constant of the cuteff of constant and the cuteff of constant the cuteff of the cutef

In these complete, some or an trace the systematic and logical development of smilting, from the wise a smill review resided valuation of furnace to the elaborate and artifactal construction as lower to the capable of the polygonal out joings occurs to have been toward the development of a true sounds does, which was approimated some placety in form, at not in paterial, in the results of the log chapter-bourd and the special and alternative the second of the sound of the second of th

is the brunicant of the polygonal ravit with the central
pler two distance lines of reasoning was relicenting the con the

tral pier, in the other, from the angles to the pier. (Fig. 35)



Fig. 35.

The former appears at first to be the more natural, but has the disadvantages of breaking the principal side of the vaulting compartment that rises from the corners into a resalient angle, and also making the main ribs from these angles across to the central pier, in half their length diagonal ribs, and in the other transverse, and of making one half represent a projecting and the other a receding angle, while the angle ribs of the outer half meet the transverse ribs of the inner half of the vault.

These objections arm entirely obviated by supposing the main vaults to run directly from the angle to the pier. In either

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tral piersin the owner, From the angles to the piers (Fig. 35)

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The forces appears the percentage and these to be seen metural out the task disappears and to some percentage and the second of the second of the second of the second to the second the second to the

car consolions are maintain obtained by supporting the

main realls to run directly from the excise to the phor. In wither

case the ridge that surrounds that half of the vault that springs from the central pier takes the form of an inner octagon. In the first case the sides of this are parallel to the walls, while in the second they take an intermediate direction; the angles of the inner octagon being opposite the centers of the outer one.

The vaulting compartments that rise from the angles of the great octagon are exactly like those that rise from the central pier, and the ribs that rise from the angles to the pier are throughout transverse ribs, while the angle ribs from each side regularly meet one another.

This latter method of vaulting was the one adopted in nearly all the finer structures, as Westminster, Salisbury, Lincoln and Wells, while at York the inner octagon is parallel with the outer one, but the difficulties are avoided by dispensing with the central pier.

As Sir Gilbert Scott has said in his Lectures on Mediaeval Architecture: "Few forms, in fact, in any style of architecture present such beauties as an octagon vaulted in this manner."

case the rigge that normands that paid of the coult that epring from the central plant special at the central plant takes, the form of an inner octagon. In the first case the the mild, while in the melts, while in the two continues that in the marine of the the continues of the cuter case can be continued and the case of the cuter case.

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This latter orthos of realting was the one microst in rearly all the finer abractures, as Vertainstor, Saltaberr, Lincoln and Vells, was le at top's the tamer octages in paralies with the octarand, but the difficulties are evolved or dispossing with the onetest pier.

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Although built as adjuncts of greater structures, and in a measure overshadowed by the greater glories of the churches to which they are joined, there is a unity and directness of purpose about them rarely to be found in the larger buildings.

England has produced greater structural works and more imposing architectural monuments, but nothing more unique and spontaneous than her chapter-houses.

Althouse out to a solution of greater structures, and is a senance oversome to the greater glocken of the courones to value they are just and althoughness of purposes that the the the the the first of outstance.

Employing accententate constant, but nothing more unique and sportangous than our compler-houses.

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